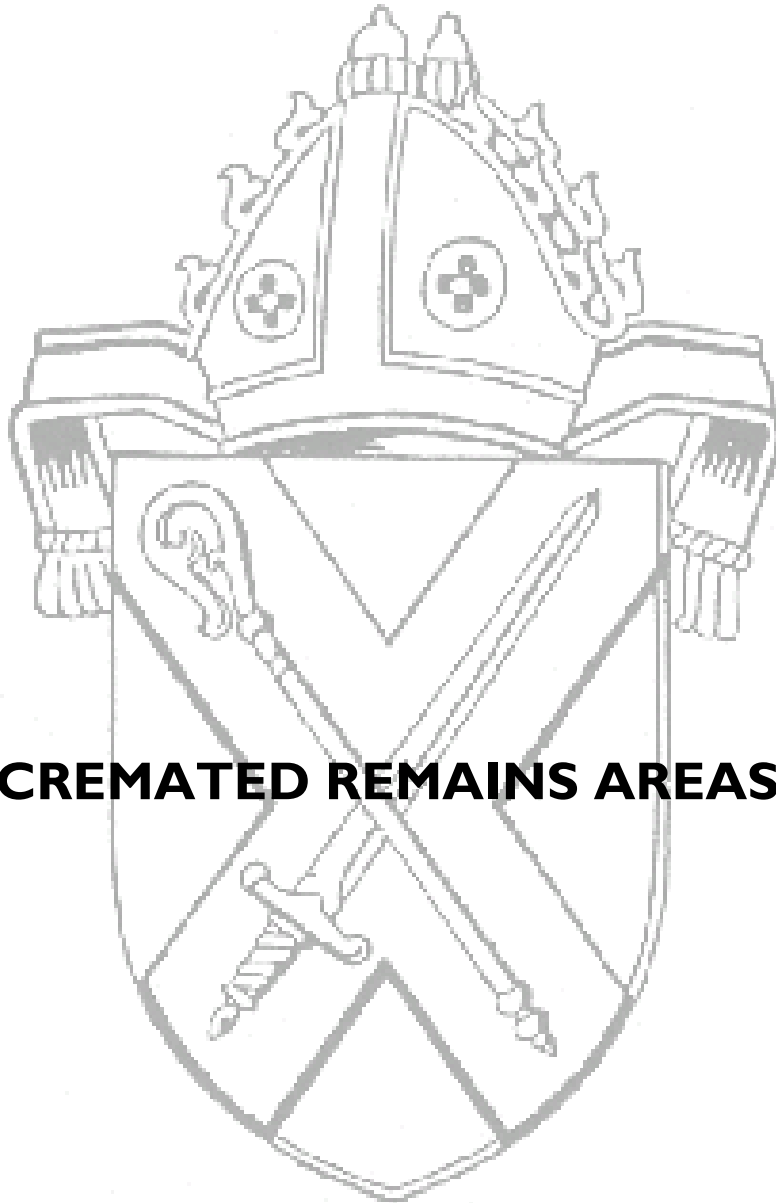


DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD
DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE



CREMATED REMAINS AREAS

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST PARISHES

Revised February 2022

CREMATED REMAINS AREAS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The number and size of areas of churchyards for the interment of cremated remains has increased significantly over the past decade. Signs are that this trend is likely to continue. The DAC has recognised that some earlier examples have not proved to be visually successful. This advisory leaflet seeks to lead parishes towards the cremation of areas which are peaceful and beautiful places in which relatives and friends of the deceased can find quietude, and which are of spiritual significance.
- 1.2 Because of the lack of a tradition in creating these areas, the DAC is hoping to encourage parishes to assist in the formulation of a new tradition.
- 1.3 The aim of this guidance booklet is to assist PCCs when they are formulating their preliminary plans. The DAC will continue to visit churchyards and offer advice on this subject as and when requested to do so.

2. THE CHANCELLOR'S REGULATIONS

Before addressing matters of design, parishes must be aware of the legal requirements of the Chancellor. The rules are set out in the Churchyard Handbook (2022 edition) – 'A Guide to the Rules Relating to Burial, Interment of Cremated Remains, and Other Matters Relating to Churchyards'.

3. SIZE

- 3.1 Before the brief for a scheme is set down the number of plots must be considered. The size will depend upon :
 - a) the projected number of cremations each year;
 - b) the length of time the area is to last – 100 years might seem to be suitable but it should be borne in mind that the grieving time for an infant death might be longer; and
 - c) the method of interment – ideally this should be directly into the ground, but if wooden caskets are to be permitted then this will require a larger area than the same number of interments without caskets. The PCC will need to formulate a policy on this.

- 3.2 An area with a sense of completeness will also project a feeling of permanence. For this reason the extension of existing areas should only be proposed if that completeness can be ensured, otherwise it will be better to create a new area.
- 3.3 A carefully plotted grid of the area must be maintained and a discreet method must be devised to allow for an individual plot to be located on the ground.

4. THE DESIGN PROBLEMS

4.1 Although the design opportunities will address aesthetic principles, there are also theological and symbolic implications, and it can be difficult to find an appropriate way forward. This is because there is no long standing tradition and therefore in our present age we are creating precedents for the future. This is no light responsibility. Issues to be considered will include:

- a) A Christian understanding of the resurrection of the spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15: 42-46) as opposed to either the resurrection of the physical body or the immortality of the soul;
- b) What it means to believe in the communion of saints (Hebrews 12:1);
- c) The natural place of grief (John 11:35);
- d) Within that the need to offer a location for personal grief that will recognise the importance of the physical remains; and
- e) The creation of an environment that will lead the bereaved to reflect and pray about facing their experiences within the Christian hope of eternal life.

As well as aesthetic issues these matters must also affect decisions about the design of the total area, as well as the particular shape and material of any memorial, together with the wording and symbols or pictures that are employed.

4.2 Initial and maintenance costs are important factors but provide little excuse for ill-considered results.

5. THE CHURCHYARD

- 5.1 As the new areas will almost always be set within an existing churchyard, it is the existing character that must be the starting point.
- 5.2 Although no two churchyards are identical, the character of an English churchyard is universally recognised. The shape and contours tend to be irregular, with the church usually centrally placed. Nature dominates with trees, grass and shrubs, a green matrix that is of crucial importance. Monuments, whether headstones or more elaborate tombs, are individual objects set in space. Modern introduction of exotic stones, black or coloured marbles threaten the balance of the unity/variety which older monuments provide. The appearance of many churches in Essex may be described as exotic in that they are predominantly built of stone, not a local material; similarly coloured monuments are acceptable and assume the significance of the church. Our red brick churches are a more natural local product and rely upon architectural qualities to express their significance. Timber and metal also play a significant role in churchyards.
- 5.3 Historic churchyards normally have the appearance of an informal space, man-made but not unduly ordered; there are exceptions, such as the yew avenue from lych-gate to porch. This informal character must be respected; without it churchyards will become cemeteries, a quite different and formal concept.
- 5.4 There will have been a progression of styles of landscape and monument design used in a churchyard over the centuries. New designs should relate to the historical designs already present, respecting them but not copying them, and should be contemporary contributions to the tradition of the churchyard.

6. THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

- 6.1 This concept when applied to churchyards is unfortunate as it relates to cemeteries and crematoria. Churchyards are not gardens and attempts to make them so, with flowers set in bare earth, is alien. The “garden” idea seems to be at the root of some of the most obvious problems we face when designing areas for cremated remains.

7. THE PERMANENCE OF MEMORIALS

- 7.1 Any memorial must appear to be permanent, seeming to be everlasting whilst accepting decay. Long lasting materials – brick, stone, bronze, indigenous hardwoods and metals – are perceived as having enduring qualities. A monument should appear complete and unchanging.
- 7.2 Simple geometrical forms and the purest geometrical shapes (spheres, cubes, pyramids) have long been associated with permanence. In the same way the right angle implies man's deliberate intention and is suggestive of immutability.
- 7.3 In contrast angled stones (sometimes used for the ease of reading) are geometrically arbitrary and undermine permanence, and lettering or plaques on a flat or near flat surface will weather badly.
- 7.4 Once vertical headstones, leaning with time, can provide a reminder of man's vain ambition.

8. SOME APPROACHES TO THE DESIGN

- 8.1 There is a need to find a form of expression that is immediately recognisable to the public and seen to be as significant as any other form of commemoration.
- 8.2 The memorial needs to be distinctive, and should not be confused with a war memorial. War memorials can take many forms, but perhaps what chiefly distinguishes them – and should therefore be avoided – are rows of small inscriptions.
- 8.3 Cremated remains areas are a relatively new thing, so ideas as to what form they should take are still evolving. However, certain elements of the design are emerging as the most popular and appropriate for churchyards. These include :
 - a) walls (new, or existing ones adapted), with names of the interred recorded on metal plaques
 - b) a central memorial, with or without names recorded
 - c) low oak rails bordering the area, set at an angle, allowing name plaques to be attached facing outwards. The cremated remains may then be interred immediately within the area adjacent to where the plaque is attached
 - d) a rectangular border of stones with an outward oblique face on which is inscribed the name and dates of the deceased. The whole rectangle of name stones is flanked by paving stones (e.g. Marks Tey).

8.4 There may be different approaches which take account of local conditions or needs. The DAC welcomes innovative solutions.

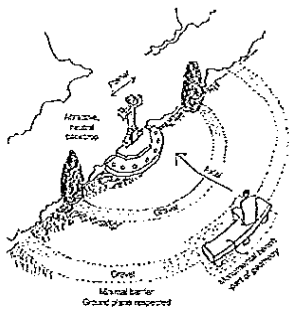


Fig. 1

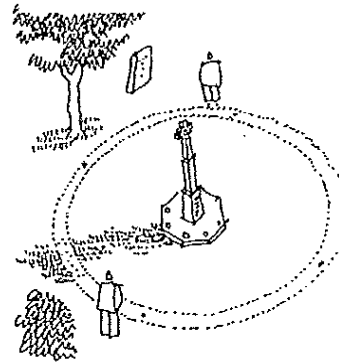


Fig. 2

8.5 The area itself is likely to be one of two types: axial (Figs 1, 3, 4, & 5) or free-standing (Figs 2, 6, & 7). With both types of layout, every advantage should be taken of existing features, particularly trees, shrubs and hedges, and the spaces they define. Sometimes it might be desirable to plant a hedge to introduce a sense of seclusion into an otherwise open churchyard (Fig 3).

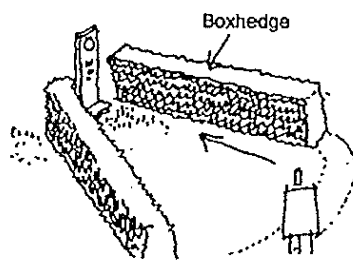


Fig. 3

8.6 Whatever form the area takes, an outward looking site is to be preferred wherever there is a suitable prospect.

8.7 Axial areas are almost always arranged against a pre-existing church or churchyard wall. They might also be in a corner with the focus in the angle. In either case, there will be one principal viewing point, usually aligned along the main approach. Axial types tend to work better as wide, shallow plots, often half-circles (as in Fig 1) or half-octagons. The main feature needs to be strong; a small 'headstone' feature will usually be inadequate. If there is to be a seat, it should be designed and sited carefully so as not to compete with the main feature or distract from the principal viewing point. Further examples of ways in which original thought can be given to the main feature, to provide a monument both significant and unique to a particular churchyard, are given in Figs 4 and 5.

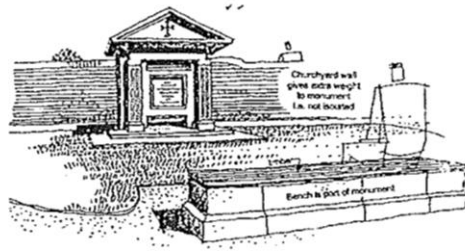


Fig. 4

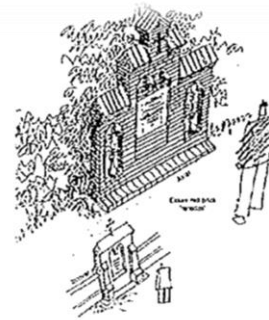


Fig. 5

8.8 Free-standing areas are better suited for open situations. They should always have a central feature, and will usually have a defined edge but no significant barriers. A definite geometric shape should be adopted eg a square, circle or octagon. It will normally be the case that the plot can be viewed from all sides; this means that the central feature will also be seen from all angles, and this should be borne in mind when choosing a design. There are a number of free standing areas with tall, elongated ‘headstone’ or obelisk features (e.g. Layer-de-la-Haye); these can be extremely handsome and they differ noticeably from other forms of monument.

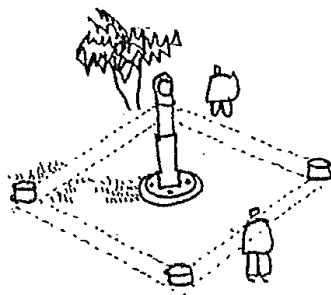


Fig. 6

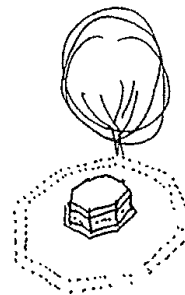


Fig. 7

9. CENTRAL MEMORIALS

- 9.1 These will usually bear an inscription of scripture or other appropriate wording to lead the person from the grief of the present to the eternity of God's peace.
- 9.2 They may also be designed to accommodate plaques or inscriptions of the names of those whose ashes are interred nearby.
- 9.3 Sometimes these are simply a specially designed brick wall with an inset stone bearing a text, and spaces for plaques. A more creative approach may be to consider how this space may become an oasis of peace and reflection, a sacred place where people feel heaven and earth meet. In the same way that much thought is given to landscape design and planting today, so at least similar thought should be given to the area of cremated remains. This includes:
 - a) the planting scheme (colours, shapes and aromas of the plants);
 - b) position of paths and seats, their design and materials;
 - c) whether a water feature is desirable or possible;
 - d) within that the type and place of the central memorial : it may be stone, metal or wood; it may be of various forms – a block, a pillar, a sundial, a planter, a vase or a figure – but it must always respect its central symmetry.

10. WALLS

- 10.1 When brick walls are used there is a lack of monumental character associated with stonework. There can be cases where a brick wall can be added to an existing wall to increase privacy or shelter, but new lengths can appear arbitrary. A complete walled garden type of enclosure could provide a meaningful setting, but such a large area in a churchyard is improbable. On a sloping site a brick retaining wall used to define an area might be useful but the functional and symbolic roles should be kept separate.
- 10.2 Stone walls, used usually as an end demarcation and focus, are subject to most of the same problems as brick walls. Furthermore, they are more likely to be confused with war memorials unless they are distinctively treated.
- 10.3 Whatever material is chosen, care must be taken in selecting a suitably sympathetic colour and texture.

II. COMMEMORATION OF NAMES

- II.1 Individual metal plaques, generally fixed to the face of a brick wall, however desirable they may seem, do present a number of problems :
- a) They do not avoid the need to have a plan and book to locate individual plots.
 - b) They can appear as add-on extras rather than an integral part of the design. Blank areas awaiting further plaques can look incomplete and undermine the sense of permanence and good weathering.
 - c) Laying them on a flat or raking surface makes them less noticeable and more readable but exposes them to more rapid erosion. An alternative is to build slate slips in to the wall with the same face dimensions as the bricks as at St Mary's Church, Widdington. These can then be carefully removed as required so that the details of the deceased can be cut into the slate before being re-fixed into the wall.
- II.2 Individual plaques are inappropriate on stone walls or monuments where carved inscriptions should be the norm, representing a simpler and more satisfactory solution.
- II.3 Bronze or slate plaques on diagonally set oak boundary rails provide a discreet arrangement but are probably only practical in a small plot, as there will only be a limited area available for fixing.
- II.4 Applications for creating an area in which it is proposed to mark individual interment sites with stone memorial plaques may be acceptable where the number of interments is likely to be low, i.e. no more than one or two per year. Where this approach is to be adopted, the area set aside needs to be defined and clear guidance needs to be given to the bereaved regarding the size, form and material of memorial stones that will be permitted.
- II.5 Where the demand is likely to be higher than this, applications will not be recommended. Large areas of individual memorial stones can, over time, have the appearance of an area of crazy paving - exacerbated where there is no control of the type of memorials that are installed - and can make the proper maintenance of the churchyard difficult especially if there is any settlement or heave in the ground.
- II.6 The DAC will not recommend **to the Chancellor** individual memorial plaques being placed in an established area where provision is already made **for memorials for those whose ashes are interred**; e.g. with a central memorial or with individual plaques on a memorial wall.
- II.7 Another option where the number of interments will be small and where there is a strong demand to mark individual interment plots may be the provision of small (approximately half scale) headstones of a consistent size and form. Again, this approach requires a suitable location to be identified such as setting the memorials along a boundary to the churchyard - as at St Mary's Church, Broxted - to avoid the appearance of

a pet cemetery. Again, this approach should not be adopted within an existing dedicated cremated remains area.

12. BOOKS OF REMEMBRANCE

12.1 Books of Remembrance may be considered to be more permanent than plaques, or even carved inscriptions which time will erode. For this reason care must be taken to ensure that the book, including its binding, the paper and the ink used, must all be of the highest quality. It is suggested that parishes refer to the DAC Guidance Booklet on “Books of Remembrance”.

13. FLOWERS

13.1 The design of an area for leaving fresh cut flowers must take into account the necessity for the PCC to control and to keep it tidy. A narrow informal area of gravel alongside a wall or hedge may be preferable to a more rigid design, but a stone plinth with inset flower vases may be satisfactory.

14. DEMARCATION

14.1 The area of the plot must be well defined. Existing features, walls, trees or hedges, are eminently suitable. Informal methods such as hedging can be successful, particularly in rural situations. Elsewhere strips of stone or brick paving (on solid bases) are suitable. Short corner posts of stone or oak are also sufficiently significant without being too assertive. Radial or rectangular grid arrangements are both acceptable.

15. ADDITIONAL PROVISION

15.1 In some churchyards there is limited demand for interment of cremated remains and the Chancellor has agreed that in appropriate cases a Faculty will be granted authorising the use of a small iron cross to mark the place of an individual interment. This will be of the traditional type commonly used in Essex churchyards between about 1850 and 1920. They measure about 18ins high and on them is stamped the name and dates of the deceased. In planning for the future, however, every PCC should, in accordance with the churchyard handbook, aim to provide in their churchyard a peaceful and beautiful area set aside for the interment of cremated remains. This guidance is intended to assist in the planning of such an area. A Faculty in respect of iron crosses will, therefore, usually authorise them in addition to the Faculty of a “Garden of Remembrance”.

16. GUIDANCE NOTES FOR THE BEREAVED

16.1 Parishes are encouraged to provide guidance notes for families in the form of a short leaflet to explain in clear terms the Church's approach to these areas and the control exercised by the Chancellor.

REFERENCES

The Chancellor's Churchyard Handbook Churchyard Handbook (2022 edition): A Guide to the Rules Relating to Burial, Interment of Cremated Remains, and Other Matters Relating to Churchyards.

The Church Buildings Council, The Churchyards Handbook, published by Church House Publishing 2001.

Website: www.chpublishing.co.uk

DAC guidance booklet 'Monuments and Headstones in Churchyards' (including suggested inscriptions) is available from the DAC Secretary (Tel No. 01245 294413/294423) or downloadable from Diocesan website: www.chelmsford.anglican.org/parishes/dac/dac_notes

The Art of Remembering by Frazer & Oestreicher, published by Carcanet, 1998 – £9.95. This is an amazingly helpful illustrated guide to what is possible and is available from the Diocesan Book Shop (Tel. No. 01245 294405).

Sacred Gardens (leaflet) by David Manning, published by The Sacred Land Project, 9a Didsbury Park, Manchester, M20 5LH.

Frazer, Harriet, Memorials by Artists, The Lettering Arts Centre, Snape Maltings, Snape, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1SP (Tel. No. 01728 688934 or 01728 688393)

The Memorial Arts Charity (now incorporating Memorials by Artists)

Website: www.memorialartscharity.org.uk

Frazer, Harriet/Hilary Meynell Memorials by Artists, for young people, children and babies, The Lettering Arts Centre, Snape Maltings, Snape, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1SA (Tel. No. 01728 688934 or 01728 688393)

The Memorial Arts Charity (now incorporating Memorials by Artists) Website: <http://www.memorialsbyartists.co.uk/publications/>

Or

<http://www.memorialsbyartists.co.uk/children/>

The DAC wishes to acknowledge the valuable contribution of David Stenning of Essex County Council in producing these notes and the accompanying drawings.

FOR YOUR NOTES

POLICY

1. The DAC will expect parishes to have given full consideration to the Chancellor's rules in the Churchyard Handbook (2022 edition) and this guidance booklet before submitting a proposal for a new cremated remains area.
2. The design of any new area must take into account the character of the existing churchyard and details and materials should respect that character.
3. Good quality natural materials should be used throughout.
4. The proposed area should be sufficient for cremations for at least one hundred years, as far as can be assessed.
5. A permanent record of interments shall be kept in the church for inspection and it must be possible for individual plots to be identified on site.
6. Faculty applications should include a scale location plan showing the proposed area in relation to the church and churchyard. Also included should be photographs of the area and details of any monuments or other structures together with paving and planting proposals. Where appropriate sample materials should also be submitted.

This is one of a series of guidelines published by the Diocesan
Advisory Committee

Copies can be downloaded from the Diocesan website:

www.chelmsford.anglican.org/parishes/dac/dac_notes

or can be obtained from the
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